



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS  
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION  
Old State House 150 Benefit Street Providence, RI 02903

Telephone 401-222-2678  
TTY 401-222-3700

Fax 401-222-2968  
[www.preservation.ri.gov](http://www.preservation.ri.gov)

MINUTES  
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION  
October 9, 2013

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA  
Ms. Morgan Devlin  
Mr. Mohamad Farzan, AIA  
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board  
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon  
Dr. Ronald Onorato  
Mr. Clark Schoettle  
Mr. Jonathan Stevens, State Historic Preservation Officer

STAFF PRESENT

Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Sr. Project Review Coordinator  
Dr. Richard Greenwood, Deputy Director  
Dr. Timothy Ives, Principal Archaeologist  
Ms. Michaela Jergensen, Sr. RIDOT Reviewer  
Ms. Mercedes Monteiro, National Register Assistant - Heritage Aide  
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director  
Ms. Sarah Zurier, Senior Special Projects Coordinator

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Janet Coit, Director DEM  
Dr. Omur Harmansah  
Mr. Karst Hoozeboom, Chairman  
John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner  
Dr. Patrick Malone  
Mr. Jared L. Rhodes, Chief of Statewide Planning representing Kevin Flynn, Asso. Dir  
Mr. Pieter N. Roos  
Mr. Marcel Valois, Executive Director EDC

GUESTS

Mr. Edward Connors, National Register Consultant  
Mr. Paul Grimaldi, The Providence Journal  
Ms. Alyssa Lozupone, Preservation Society of Newport County  
Mr. Richard Youngkin, National Register Consultant

## II. AGENDA

### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 A.M., Dr. Onorato presiding in the absence of Karst Hoozeboom, Chairman.

### 2. Minutes of September 11, 2013

On a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Ms. Devlin, the Commission unanimously VOTED to approve the Minutes of September 11, 2013.

### 3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson is continuing to work with the RI Division of Taxation on implementation of the 2013 Historic Preservation Tax Credit program.

b) RIHPHC staff members are continuing to develop the federal Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Grants program. Site visits are being conducted for each property. A full report and recommendations for funding will be presented at the November 13 RIHPHC Commission meeting.

c) Two successful events have been held. On September 14 the annual statewide Heritage Festival was held at Roger Williams National Memorial in Providence. On September 29, the annual Rhody Awards for Historic Preservation were presented at historic Weekapaug Inn in Westerly.

d) On October 7, 2013, Governor Chafee appointed his Senior Advisor and Director of Special Projects Jonathan Stevens to replace Mr. Sanderson as State Historic Preservation Officer. Mr. Sanderson will continue to serve as Executive Director of the RIHPHC. No additional information was available. Following discussion, on a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Farzan, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to request that Mr. Sanderson report to the Commission on coordination between Mr. Stevens and RIHPHC.

### 4. Appointment of the Loan Committee

Mr. Sanderson explained that the membership of the RIHPHC Loan Committee is vacant. Previously, Commissioner Robert Goff chaired the committee, Commissioner John Grosvenor was a member of the Committee, and there was one vacancy. However, neither Mr. Goff nor Mr.

Grosvenor was reappointed to the Commission in 2013, and new committee members need to be appointed. Mr. Sanderson reported that Mr. Schoettle, Executive Director of the Providence Revolving Loan Fund, Mr. Farzan, a preservation architect from Newport, and Ms. Devlin, historic sites coordinator for the statewide Preserve Rhode Island, had agreed to serve on the Loan Committee. Following discussion, on a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Dr. Morenon, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to appoint Commissioners Schoettle, Farzan, and Devlin as members of the Loan Committee.

5. National Register of Historic Places

Final Approval: Mechanical Fabric Company Complex, 55 Cromwell Street, Providence

Mr. Connors presented information about the property. The Mechanical Fabric Company Complex, built between 1891 and ca. 1925, occupies slightly less than two acres in the densely-settled Elmwood section of Providence, RI. The plant comprises six brick, closely-sited industrial buildings, one to four stories in height, arranged in three parallel rows along two internal alleyways in the center of a long block bounded by Sprague Street on the north, Cromwell Street on the south, Dexter Street on the west and Elmwood Avenue on the east.

As first built, the plant comprised a three-story brick factory building fronting on Sprague Street (Building 1) and a one-story building that combined the functions of boiler house and vulcanizing room (Building 2) behind it. Shortly after, the company erected the largest building of the complex (Building 3) for the manufacture of bicycle tires and rubber thread. Originally a three-story building, the company expanded the footprint of this building between 1904 and 1908 and added a fourth floor by 1920. The company also erected a single-story chalking/spreading/drying building (Building 4) ca. 1892. The next addition to the complex (ca. 1897) was a single-story, ironclad warehouse (Building 5). Building 6, a single-story brick building, was built and reconfigured between 1918 and 1925.

The Mechanical Fabric Company complex is significant for its associations with the industrialization of Providence in the period from the late 19th century through the 1920s and, in particular, with the diversification and success of the city's rubber industry in the years after Charles Goodyear's original vulcanization patents expired ca. 1865. While rubber footwear, blankets, raincoats and medical supplies had been manufactured in the state since the mid-19th century, the Mechanical Fabric Company developed important innovations in the production of rubber- and textile-based foundation for the card clothing used on carding machines for both cotton and woolen manufacture. The plant was also the site of national innovations in pneumatic bicycle tire manufacture.

The Mechanical Fabric Company complex is also significant as a fine example of the design and building layout of brick, steam-powered industrial complexes of the late 19th century. Despite

changes and adaptations made through the 20th century, the complex retains all six of the buildings that housed the separate departments of a rubber manufacturing operation and maintains the characteristic appearance of a late-19th-century industrial complex.

Dr. Greenwood reported that the nomination was prepared in accordance with NPS regulations, that notice of the nomination was provided to the owner, the City of Providence, and the public and no objections were received. He also presented a communication from Commissioner Patrick Malone who although out-of-town wanted to share his evaluation of the property, stating in part: "This nomination of Mechanical Fabric Company complex in Providence is a masterful summary of the many significant things about these buildings. The survival of a six building complex of this obvious historical importance is remarkable. I am much impressed by the quality of these largely functional buildings and the beautiful smokestack. I like the physical evidence of steam power, the wood and metal roof trusses (in building #5 for instance), the original windows in parts of some buildings, and the way the buildings form a tight complex. The architectural descriptions are excellent, although I would like to hear a little more about the very tall, tapered polygonal smokestack, which is one of the best I have seen in Rhode Island. The photographs, maps, and drawings add to the effectiveness of the nomination."

Mr. Schoettle noted that the property is already included in the City of Providence "Industrial and Commercial Buildings Historic District."

Following discussion, on a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Farzan, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the nomination.

Preliminary Presentation: Clark House/Card's Camp, 1065 Worden's Pond Road, Wakefield

Dr. Greenwood presented information about the property. He explained that the owner is considering applying to RIHPHC for a Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Grant and wants to know if the property is eligible for National Register listing.

Once the center of a typical farm, the farm fields on the south side of the road have reforested and are now kept as wildlife habitat, and the land surrounding the farmhouse on the north side of the road contains a number of new dormitory buildings and other camp facilities, including a swimming pool, that do not relate to the property's historic agricultural use.

The farmhouse retains the original hewn timber framing (once plastered and now exposed) and an attractive Early Victorian curved staircase that was installed in the mid-19th century when the original center chimney was removed. The house has also undergone modern changes, including replacement of the front doorway with a stock reproduction doorway, replacement of all the windows and their interior trim, and application of vinyl siding.

During discussion, Commissioners noted that the property no longer possessed the character of a historic farm from the late 18th and 19th centuries due to the reforestation of the farmland and the introduction of many recent buildings on the north side of the road. Commissioners also noted that the farmhouse has had a number of architectural alterations and loss of historic fabric that severely reduces the building's architectural integrity and its ability to meet the National Register criteria for individual listing.

Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Mr. Abbott, the Commission unanimously

VOTED that after careful consideration of all the information, RIHPHC concludes that the property does not meet the National Register criteria for listing. Nonetheless, the Commission recognizes that the building still shares in South Kingstown's history and should be considered to be a place of local historical interest.

Preliminary Presentation: Rams Point, 77 Watch Hill Road, Westerly

Dr. Greenwood presented information about the property. As documented by historical information and current photographs provided by Richard Youngken, Ram Point, the Dr. John Whittredge Williams House, is a product of a significant phase in the historical development of the Westerly shore as a summer resort in the late 19th and early 20th century. The summer estate that Dr. Whittredge developed on Ram Point in 1903 is notable as a fine example of a turn-of-the century shingled summer house and associated outbuildings (including a carriage house, potting shed and boathouse), with a picturesque landscape setting on the Pawcatuck River. The design of the house is attributed to the noted Baltimore architect, Douglas Thomas Jr., a premise that warrants further investigation and development. The historic setting of the property is well-preserved, and the outbuildings and the interior and exterior of the main house are little altered.

Following discussion, on a motion by Mr. Farzan, seconded by Ms. Devlin, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for National Register nomination.

## 5. 2014 Statewide Historic Preservation Conference

Ms. Zurier informed the Commission that the 2014 R.I. Statewide Historic Preservation Conference would be held on Saturday, April 26 in Warren with visits to Barrington as well. Warren Preservation Society member and longtime preservation advocate Davison Bolster had announced the date and location to the audience at the recent Preservation Celebration on September 29. Ms. Zurier invited commissioners to provide input on the conference theme, workshop topics, and keynote speaker. Mr. Abbott suggested showcasing the preservation of Water Street in Warren, and Dr. Onorato added that the preservation of Warren's working

waterfront was important to emphasize--particularly the vision and legacy of Luther Blount of Blount Boats and Blount Seafood. Mr. Farzan offered to forward some suggestions for keynote speakers.

6. Other business

There was no other business.

7. Next regular meeting date: Wednesday November 13, 2013 at 9:30 AM.

8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:20 A.M.

Minutes recorded by,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Edward F. Sanderson".

Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director